Department for Education

School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool Checklist

Reference AF594860937 -DRAFT-

Organisation details

Company number:	**7645701**
Trust name:	**Michaela Community Schools Trust**

Summary of Questions and Answers

Governance		
Question 1	Have the chief financial officer (CFO), accounting officer, chair of trustees and the governance professional read the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) 2023? ATH sent to all governors in the autumn term	Yes
Question 1a	Do they understand their role in complying with the trust's charitable objects, company and charity law, and the funding agreement? No issues raised by internal controls evaluations or year end audits.	Yes
Question 2	Has the board assessed its composition in terms of skills, effectiveness, leadership and impact? Membership of the board is stable, the most recent skills audit showed good coverage of key skills required	Yes

Question 3	Does the board have a plan in place to address any skills and knowledge gaps? Currently no skills gaps, to be addressed when there is a change in membership.	Yes
Question 4	Has the board appointed the senior executive leader as accounting officer? HT is Accounting Officer	Yes
Question 4a	Has the board assured itself that the senior leader has appropriate skills to fulfil their role as accounting officer in accordance with the financial responsibilities of the duty to the public purse? Highly experienced HT, seeks professional advice if required	Yes
Question 5	Has the board appointed a qualified and/or experienced chief financial officer (CFO)? Ali Mansfield is CFO, she has been in post for 8 years.	Yes
Question 6	Has the board appointed a governance professional who is someone other than a trustee, principal or chief executive of the trust? Ali Mansfield is the governance professional (clerk to the governors), she has been in post for 9 years.	Yes
Question 7	Has the board met at least 3 times in the last year? Academic Year 2022-23: 12.12.22, 22.03.23, 23.05.23, 13.07.23 Academic Year 2023-24: 18.12.23, meeting arranged for 25.03.24, summer term meeting tba	Yes
Question 8	Has the trust held an Annual General Meeting (AGM) with members in the last 12 months?	Yes
	What percentage of members attended the AGM?	60%

Question 9	Has the board approved a written scheme of financial delegation? This is covered by the Finance Policy	Yes
Question 10	Does the trust have a finance committee, or equivalent, with clear terms of reference and a knowledgeable and experienced chair?	No
Question 11	Does the trust have an audit and risk committee? The audit and risk functions are covered by the whole board.	Yes, but it's combined with another committee
Question 11a	Does the audit and risk committee reflect minimum best practice by not allowing trust employees to be members? Trust employees are present but do not have voting rights when the annual accounts are approved.	Yes
Question 11b	Has the audit and risk committee met at least 3 times in the last year? Combined with FGB	Yes
Question 12	Does the board of trustees take overall responsibility for risk management? Risk register is reviewed and updated on a termly basis by governors	Yes
Question 13	Does the academy trust comply with the conflict of interest and related party transaction requirements outlined in the ATH? Declarations of Pecuniary interest forms are completed annually by governors and senior members of staff. Governors confirm/update these declarations at each meeting.	Yes
Question 14	Has the trust published its governance arrangements on its website?	No
Trust financial strategy		

Question 15	Has the board of trustees carried out a going concern assessment of the trust to inform the basis of the financial statements? Delegated to auditors, reported 18.12.23	Yes
Question 15a	Can the board of trustees provide evidence of the information used to inform this assessment and the assumptions that were made? Annual audited accounts	Yes
Question 16	Can the trust provide evidence that trustees approved the 3-year financial forecast before it was submitted to the ESFA? Minutes 13.07.23	Yes
Question 17	Can the trust provide evidence that trustees have compiled accurate budget forecasts? Budget monitoring reports indicate accurate forecasting, although there are sometimes post budget events (eg. additional funding from government, unplanned remedial works to the building)	Yes
Question 18	Has the board of trustees reviewed pupil number estimates each term and challenged them if required? Pupil numbers are included in the termly finance report. There is a waiting list for every year group 7 to 11.	Yes
Question 19	If the trust has a cumulative surplus, has the board of trustees set a policy for holding these surplus funds?	No
Question 20	If a cumulative deficit has been forecast within the 3-year budget, is there a plan to mitigate it? Deficit comfortably covered by reserves until 2025-26, recruitment to be tailored as required for future years.	Yes
Question 21	Does the trust take an integrated approach to curriculum and financial planning? Curriculum spending is prioritised by school leaders	Yes

Question 22	Does the trust survey its physical estate and ensure adequate capital provision for this in its budget? Ongoing oversight by Operations Manager, reserves in place to cover any unplanned capital expenditure.	Yes
Question 23	Are trustees aware of their statutory duties under health and safety legislation? Covered in Academies Trust Handbook	Yes
Question 24	Does the trust have an estate vision, strategy and asset management plan?	In part
Question 25	Does the trust have an appropriate business continuity plan, including adequate insurance cover? RPA insurance in place. Business Continuity Plan in place.	Yes
Setting the Annual Budget		
Question 26	Does the trust set a well-informed and balanced budget? Budgets are set based on confirmed DfE income and conservative estimates of other income based on prior years, so any discrepancies in income are positive. A budget with an in-year deficit covered by reserves was agreed for the current year.	Yes
Question 27	Does the budget-setting process allow time for the board of trustees to review and challenge the information? Proposed budget is circulated to governors for comment before approval at the summer term FGB.	Yes
Question 28	Can the trust act quickly to amend the budget if pupil numbers are significantly different from what was projected? There are always a handful of staff who leave each term. In the unlikely event of a significant drop in pupils numbers these members of staff would not be replaced.	Yes

Question 29	Is income and expenditure in line with budget projections? Some discrepancies: Additional funding from DfE, income currently 11% above budget. Expenditure 5% above budget, staffing is as expected, premises costs above budget but covered in part by insurance claims.	Yes
Question 29a	Is the board of trustees informed of significant differences in a timely manner? Monthly reports to HT and CoG, bi-monthly reports with commentary to all governors	Yes
Question 29b	Do the differences result from planned changes and/or circumstances that could not have been predicted? Differences in income due to unannounced funding from DfE, conservative estimates of income from consultancy and donations. Main differences in expenditure due to unplanned recruitment and unexpected building maintenance issues. Budget constraints did not allow for provision to be built in this year, but governors are aware that these unexpected events can be covered from reserves if necessary.	Yes
Question 30	Are in-year balances at a reasonable level? Having set a deficit budget, at month 4 the budget was showing a surplus.	Yes
Question 31	Does the trust have a clear plan for using the money it plans to hold in balance at the end of the year? Continue to underwrite sixth form. Funds in place to address building maintenance issues. Funds in place to cover shortfall in government funding to retain excellent staff.	Yes
Staffing		

Question 32	Does the trust review and challenge its staffing structure regularly to ensure it meets the needs of the trust and maintains financial integrity? Covered by SLT	Yes
Question 33	Does the pay of senior leaders follow a robust evidence-based process? Evidence of consecutive Outstanding Ofsted judgements confirm robust PM of senior staff.	Yes
Question 34	Does the trust benchmark the size of the senior leadership team in its schools annually against similar schools?	No
Question 35	Has the trust published on its website the number of employees whose total benefits exceeded £100,000 for the previous year ending 31 August?	Yes

Value for money

Question 36	If the trust benchmarks its income and expenditure (and that of its schools) against similar trusts and schools, which of these possible actions has it taken after benchmarking in the last 12 months? - The trust took a different action (please specify) Benchmarking exercise undertaken by Finance Governors did not throw up any unexpected issues.	
Question 37	Does the trust have procedures for purchasing goods and services that both meet legal requirements and secure value for money? Procurement Policy in place	Yes
Question 38	Are the trustees given the opportunity to challenge the trust's plans for replacing or renewing contracts for goods and services that are due to expire? Annual contract review. When large value contracts are renewed, these are approved at FGB.	Yes

Question 39	What has the trust considered when replacing or renewing contracts in the last 12 months? - Not replacing the contract if it no longer meets the trust's requirements - Current contract terms - Bringing the service in-house instead of contracting it out - Length of contract - Value of contract - Risks such as avoidance of Related Party Transactions and legal challenges Operations Manager and Finance Manager discuss contracts which are coming up for renewl. Phone lease not renewed, now own the phones, considered bringing payroll in-house, but service has improved hugely in recent months, careful consideration of length of energy contracts before signing up.	
Question 40	Does the trust consider collaboration with others if this would improve value for money, for example on sharing staff or joint purchasing?	No
Question 41	Does the trust seek to use DfE approved frameworks, where applicable, to ensure procurement compliance and value for money?	No
Protecting the public purse		
Question 42	Has the trust responded to all audit report findings? One recommendation: Finance Policy does not cover controls in place to ensure ESFA funding received matches expectations. This does take place and will be specified when the Finance Policy is reviewed this term.	Yes
Question 43	Has the trust adhered to the internal scrutiny arrangements defined in the ATH? There were 12 actions from Juniper last year, 1 high priority, 3 medium priority and 8 low priority. All recommendations from Juniper have been actioned.	Yes

Question 44	Does the trust regularly review its internal control arrangements to safeguard against fraud, theft and cybercrime by staff, contractors, suppliers and other third parties? Ongoing review as roles and personnel change, formal scrutiny during internal controls reviews.	Yes
Question 45	Are all staff aware of the trust's whistleblowing arrangements and who they should report concerns to? Whistleblowing Policy in place	Yes
Question 46	Does the trust have an adequate accounting system that delivers accurate reports, including ESFA returns? Sage	Yes

Action plan

Governance

Question 10	**Does the trust have a finance committee, or equivalent, with clear terms of reference and a knowledgeable and experienced chair?**
Action planned	There is a group of nominated Finance Governors who review and advise other governors on financial matters but all decisions are taken by the whole board.
Target date	31/07/2024
Question 14	**Has the trust published its governance arrangements on its website?**
Action planned	This is a deliberate strategy due to current sensitive issues at the school.
Target date	31/07/2024

Trust financial strategy

Question 19	If the trust has a cumulative surplus, has the board of trustees set a policy for holding these surplus funds?
Action planned	Reserves Policy to be updated. Investment Policy to be written.
Target date	31/07/2024

Question 24	Does the trust have an estate vision, strategy and asset management plan?
Action planned	Reconfiguration of the building has taken place over recent years. No formal asset management plan, Operations Manager manages upkeep of the building.
Target date	31/07/2024

Staffing

Question 34	Does the trust benchmark the size of the senior leadership team in its schools annually against similar schools?
Action planned	N/A Size of SLT is matched to needs of Michaela
Target date	31/07/2024

Value for money

Question 40	Does the trust consider collaboration with others if this would improve value for money, for example on sharing staff or joint purchasing?
Action planned	N/A

Target date	31/07/2024
Question 41	**Does the trust seek to use DfE approved frameworks, where applicable, to ensure procurement compliance and value for money?**
Action planned	Other frameworks in place
Target date	31/07/2024

Your details

Name:	Mrs Alison Mansfield
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Telephone number	07753 86564

Accounting officer details

Name	Katharine Birblasingh
Role of accounting officer	Principal

Declaration

The information submitted in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

The accounting officer has reviewed the information provided and the trust is working towards compliance with the mandatory requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook.

The board of trustees has approved the information provided in this form or will review it at the next board meeting.

Date draft version created:

12 March 2024